

Table tennis needs an important update - now!

Corona changes everything. And reveals many previous alibis and weak points. Tomorrow's problems in our sport can therefore no longer be solved with yesterday's tools. Previous thinking is a big part of our problem. Time for a critical look at the things that should change in Germany. And when asked what the future of our sport is worth to us.

by
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(Part 1)



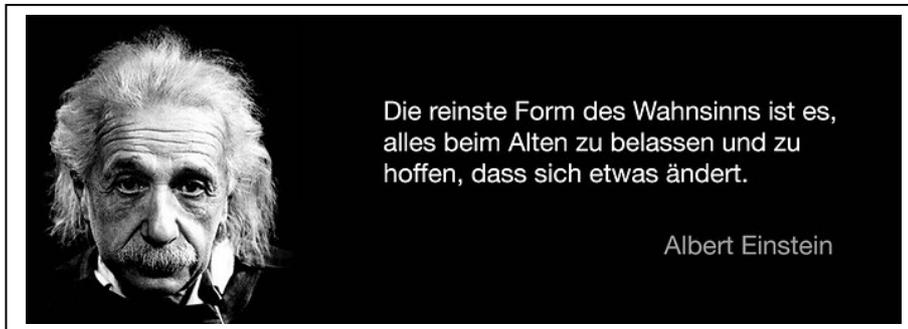
Unusual times require unusual measures. So that this does not only refer to “hygiene concepts” for re-entry into training and competition, I would like to take a critical look at the status quo of our sport. To make you think. What is needed for this is the impartiality of the reader (who can certainly have a critical distance) and his imagination and creativity. My main concern is to ask whether we are obviously at a dead end with our sport, from which we can and will only come out again when we have honestly learned to take the need for change seriously and to exchange arguments and to allow each other. In such a way that they have a chance to get close to us before we judge or evaluate them. The current crisis offers an ideal opportunity for this because a lot has been decelerated and uncovered.

Do we use them?

Michael Gross was recently asked what he, as a corporate and personnel consultant, had to give people to deal with the Corona crisis. He reached deep into the box of well-known sports metaphors: “... one should understand the lockdown time like a training camp,” advised the three-time Olympic swimming champion, “as a time-limited phase with clear structures and a focus on the essentials. The fact that we simply could no longer maintain certain rules and processes, that the motto “We have always done it this way” has been suspended, could now lead to improvements even after the crisis,” he said 55-year-old in an interview with the FAZ. And: "In times of Corona, four things are needed for this: flexibility and creativity in working out new solutions, discipline and perseverance in implementation, currently with the behavioral requirements due to the pandemic, but also to realign clubs and associations."

Without wanting to be pessimistic or to play the spoilsport (in a country where people always like to poke at the bearer of bad news instead of the person who caused it): I'm currently afraid that this willingness to change will be difficult to get going. The loud criticism of the Covid-19 protection and action concept of the German Table Tennis Association as a hygiene concept for re-entry into training and competition is just one example of many that reflects this. It's about something much more profound ... and that should soon change in our sport in Germany! I would therefore like to try to “categorize” individual points through which our sport could receive significantly better and more intensive impulses than before.

1. Willingness of the clubs to change in many important points (especially: female table tennis (!), Table tennis for senior citizens, modern financing, qualified training for all age groups, regular, contemporary table tennis-specific and management training for board members from clubs, etc.)



2. The clubs invest in the right things (What is our table tennis future worth to us in the club?)



3. Creation of a functioning judiciary of the associations at all levels of competition operations (Why are we not able to enforce our own set of rules at all levels?)



4. Creation of a single and uniform game system throughout Germany for team competitions by the associations at all levels of competition operations



6. Conscious, wanted and accepted recognition of professionally qualified trainers' work in associations for mutual benefit



The first part of this article will deal with the first two of these five points, which I see as elementary for a fundamental discussion about the future of our sport. Part 2 will follow in a few weeks ...

1. Willingness of the clubs to change in many important points

If people do not feel comfortable or unsafe in their own skin, it can be observed how they keep doing strange things: they stay with the "old". This can be seen above all in many of our clubs, felt by the majority of all clubs - and not just now in this crisis, but years before. People who are in the management responsibility of their association are not only currently indulging in the past and showing and telling this. You can currently do this on Facebook or on various websites of the clubs. very nice to watch. While a virus actually teaches us to change urgently and asks us to look and our creativity into the future, chronicles and "great old videos" are being pulled out and published. "Those were the days ..."...

These people all have something in common, which is a tendency to hold on to what is. And if anything else happens that is unprepared, they always try harder in the same direction. We also know this from the psychotherapeutic context, which is called "more of the same" there. This is basically the ornament of the neurosis: you keep increasing your efforts in the same direction ... and don't try to do anything new ...

This can be proven, among other things, by a very interesting research approach from the USA, where an American professor gave a setting of people a coffee cup. There were about 200 people and they then had this coffee cup. And then he offered them a chocolate bar in exchange for the coffee cup. 70% of the test persons stuck to this coffee cup and 30% exchanged it for the chocolate bar. Then he again gave a setting of 200 people, other people, a chocolate bar and offered a coffee cup in exchange for the chocolate bar. 70% of the test persons stuck to this chocolate bar.

"Loss aversion", etc. has to do with it; this is a well-known phenomenon from psychology. What shows up? Many association leaders in Germany are essentially all reactionaries: they glorify the past ("Better the sparrow in hand than the pigeon on the roof") or in a psychotherapeutic context: "Better the known misfortune than the unknown happiness". And so the ignorance (which I don't want to blame anyone for at first) is the sign of the wrong path - which we have been going in our sport for at least two decades.

When asked what it would be like to move with the times (because otherwise you move with the times ...), such a question has so far left little impression: "Yes, and? After all, I do this on a voluntary basis! I have "no time" for more and

... besides: we have always done it that way! "... are among others the killer arguments with which everyone who was elected to take responsibility verbally stole himself out of this responsibility when confronted with ideas for further development . "Administration instead of design - is ultimately an association and not a company ... we" only "do popular sport". Can you see it like this ... but you don't have to and shouldn't. Not in your own interest ...

In this context, however, I am less interested in the question of why people can run an association on a voluntary basis and at the same time have a stressful and time-consuming job. And others who are less stressed in their jobs are not so good at it. I am more interested in the question: Where are the events, the meetings at which those responsible for our sport from associations and clubs can think, discuss and argue as realistically as possible and courageously about what they would like to have in table tennis in Germany in the future? What should table tennis Germany look like in 5 years? Your own club? Your own national association? What would you like to change there ... e.g. on the subject of girls 'and ladies' table tennis, senior table tennis, referees in the halls, spectators also in district classes at team competitions, solid finances thanks to many members and monthly fees that can be sold up to date, qualified training and coaching work, the Generates a high level of motivation among players, e.g. when it comes to game systems in the field of competitions, image work on and in our sport or - last but not least - when trying to get the table tennis player who has been running away for 30 years to try to explain ... because you might has already given some thought to the long-term consequences of this.



A basic investment in the mind would ask: Which ideas, which tools, which systems, methods, procedures would be required and would one need to jump in from the constant discussion in one's own association about game systems and class divisions and from the organizational and external performing middle ages of many clubs to be able to venture into the modern age? Into the digital age, the second machine age, in which there are no longer any simple answers to the questions of our time because there is an enormous social upheaval. In which you have to be innovative and creative. With everything! If most clubs in Germany still cling to yesterday, then future-oriented defenders of our sport know that you can give yourself that for free. Just like many of my colleagues in at least professional training work always annoy a bit and ask: "What is needed?"

How can it be done better? More beautiful or different? How can we evolve? More effective? More sensible? What is possible? How and when? And above all: why? "

How about, for example, progressive ideas ...?

- In order to give the problem of "insufficient willingness to volunteer" at least a new perspective in terms of formal organization, the following could be discussed: Change the association's statutes, the electoral period for an elected president or department head is 2 years. For the following electoral term, he may not run for another electoral term ... (at least in the clubs that suffer from "standstill" (regression), this could bring "movement" in terms of responsibility and creativity for their own club)
- The membership fee in an association for adults is (example :) € 20 per month. If the member works on the board, the monthly fee is reduced to € 8.00. In addition, transparent and effective short meetings of the board of directors 1 x per quarter (max. 90 min.) To discuss the respective development. Selection in the board based on (professional) competence ...
- Qualified table tennis training is possible and affordable for all clubs in Germany! Even for professional training work. If one accepts that in the statutes when the membership fees are used, the formulation "Promotion of table tennis" is so vague and imprecise that it cannot automatically be deduced that the fees are also spent to finance a qualified coaching performance in the club, then a qualified trainer service is always an "externally financed service". And with good arguments, it can be sold to all members if a qualified colleague gains the necessary trust from the members through trial training and leaves a good impression. The "impetus" (and its financing) is the first "investment" that will be worthwhile for an association. All that's left to do is choose the right trainer. And a little math:
- $\text{Costs of the trainer per hour} \times \text{number of hours per month} + \text{expenses} = \text{amount X}$: $\text{number of players who are trained during the training period} = \text{monthly fee for qualified training!}$ (Incidentally, the statutes could also be changed so that the text of the statutes also includes: "External trainers / training services must always be financed externally (e.g. through participant contributions, additional contributions, etc.)!"

2. The clubs invest in the right things (What is our table tennis future worth to us in the club?)

All of us, the German Table Tennis Federation and its regional associations, no longer have to fool ourselves: there will only be a table tennis future together. Together with other associations, only in cooperation. This does not mean gaming communities, but cooperation projects in which one club learns from the other. In the best case scenario, both learn and develop. The number of clubs that invest, i.e. shape their future, has always been manageable (and is becoming more and more manageable) than the number of clubs that prefer to stick to their rut, "save" and practice business-as-usual. But everyone should know: only those who are not afraid of dealing with the present and the future have a future. A good future. And the DTTB should find ways to re-establish contact with the grassroots; if possible, not virtually, but personally ... to find out where these clubs are and what is really preventing the majority of his clubs from moving in this direction as well.

It should be conveyed: Investments are progress, not going back. One forward. Those who invest want to change. And there is no change without investment - even if an almost infinite number of people still believe that. And swap coffee cups for chocolate bars ... "Invest in talent, invest in relationships, invest in yourself, that is, in the things that you love and that mean something to you!" ... you sometimes want to call out to all associations that seem to be asleep. And don't invest blindly ...



Germany is swimming in money. 6.7 trillion euros is in his private household accounts - excluding real estate (!). But Germany - and thus also its clubs - suffers from a deficit of ideas. And fear. We often have "security generations" in clubs who don't trust themselves enough, and above all don't trust themselves enough creativity, especially now in this time of the digital revolution. We lived and still live in great prosperity and under conditions of low uncertainty - despite Corona.

And the dilemma today: Clubs that believe they do not need a decent website, regulated, qualified training and no competition support for young talent (not even for their adults), no social media channels to advertise themselves, no modern club structure (with up-to-date monthly club fees that reflect the offer of the association), of course, have the right to do so. In this case, however, you should be prepared to accept the consequence, because everything you do has a consequence and everything you do not do likewise.

Overall, this attitude or just the attempt to avoid a factual and intellectual examination of the current transformational development of our sports and social landscape leads to ruin. Spending no money (i.e. saving) in this context would only be an attempt to slow down the pace of development so much that one no longer has to experience the consequences for oneself. With their attitude they are extending something, the end of which is actually foreseeable.



And with it they bury themselves, their club and their sport. And that's because they believe that investing needs total certainty ... which is of course an illusion. We need a progressive agenda for progressive change ... a necessity when a sport is not doing well (anymore). In table tennis in Germany there is a lack of debates, discussions and exchanges of opinions. But you cannot start a debate about a progressive agenda if you take the sport-political and institutional framework as a given.

I define a progressive agenda, progressive leadership:

It is about long-term progress in sport policy on the basis of clear concepts and goals for more members, more coaching employment, more income in clubs. Majorities must be won for this. This includes good arguments and security, a stable emotional and sporting development of all young players, participation of clubs in projects and solidarity of associations with trainers who have and want to turn their hobby into a job or part of a job at their own risk. And a great solidarity with one another! We, on the other hand, still experience the high point of practical table tennis satisfaction when all newspapers can announce at the same time: "Timo Boll again European champion"! Our country measures its success almost exclusively at the level of high-performance sport. It is not unimportant, on the contrary.

But it hardly helps at all in actively recruiting members ... at least not in the past 30 years. The evidence for this is missing due to the bare figures alone. All titles won by German teams and players since 1989 (including the World Cup title by Roßkopf and Fetzner in the same year) have so far not had any impact on membership development in Germany.

**„Eine Demokratie, in der
nicht gestritten wird,
ist keine!“
(Helmut Schmidt)**

The numbers have been falling continuously since 1989. But 1 million members in clubs in Germany ... in one of the self-proclaimed "top 5 recreational sports in the world" ... is that a utopian goal? 1/80 of the population would participate in one of the "top 5 recreational sports" in Germany? Would

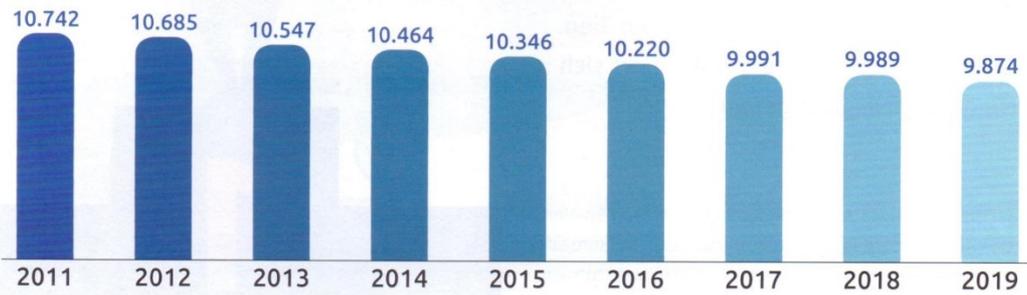
that be so unrealistic? At the moment the rate is 0.7% (!!) in relation to the total population ... so about 1/160 ...

High-performance sport and its quality says nothing about the quality or distribution of the need for change in our sport; And certainly not about their externalized costs, at which clubs and players pay for the negative tendencies and fewer and fewer players remaining. On the contrary: it obscures a lot. A low number of coaches in clubs says little about the quality of the work of coaches in our sport who could work. All other indicators that would actually say something about the training quality hardly appear in the discourse of the teaching supervisors in the state and federal government: the socially competent quality of personnel management / player management / talent assessment of coaches; the occupational risk, the (further) educational mobility between associations and trainers; the actual connections between association and club activities and the real "burden" of volunteering.

So how can the current situation in table tennis Germany in mid-2020 be perceived?

- Even before the current Corona crisis, many clubs were in an apparent "paralysis", hardly any signs of renewal, change or future-proof ideas (resilience) with and in social or other media, hardly any "trying out" new ideas, concepts or ideas . Discussions about the need for changes in the organizational structures of the clubs? Nothing. Many believe that they can solve a club problem by not trying it out. In doing so, however, they are ignoring the problem. The most important investment tool is thought! Care, postponement, preservation make no sense. Long-term investments are in short supply.

Anzahl der Tischtennisabteilungen und Tischtennisvereine in Deutschland



Im Detail

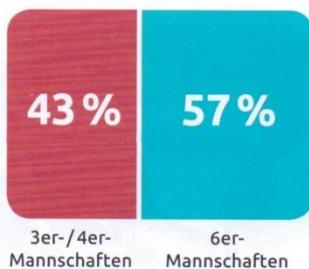


Quelle: DOSB Bestandserhebungen / click-TT

435 sind Vereine in Hessen, Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Niedersachsen und NRW

Mannschaftsgrößen

Verhältnis 3er-/4er-Mannschaften zu 6er-Mannschaften im bundesweiten Spielbetrieb der Herren

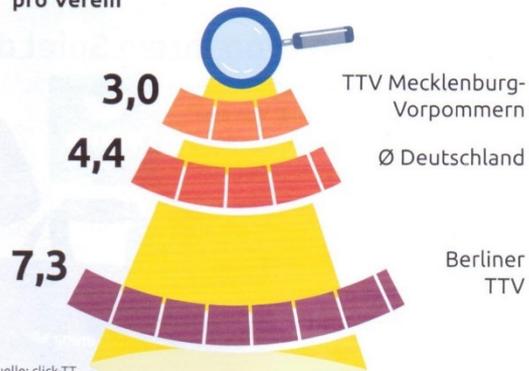


zico: Shutterstock / filip robert

Quelle: click-TT

Vereinsgröße

Durchschnittliche Anzahl von Mannschaften pro Verein



Quelle: click-TT

- During the corona crisis, the German Table Tennis Association published a Covid-19 protection and action concept that resulted from the need to give as many clubs as possible access to their hall again and later to competitions. Instead of thanking the umbrella organization, the DTTB is held responsible by many players and clubs for the "measures that cannot or can hardly be implemented", smiled at and criticized ... and the core idea of the concept "resistant to knowledge" is ignored.

- One of the larger regional associations in Germany publishes the status of its structural reforms. With the aim of preventing further loss of membership. With at least dubious methods and “reforms”. A length of text is published that is more reminiscent of a Prussian, narrow-minded declaration of commitment. As if the “people” have to read everything that is “made”. In the end, very few people will read it ... if only because of the length. Responsible for over 70 years, no particular social media affinity can be determined and a target that calls itself into question.

- Professional trainers hardly get any attention, acceptance or appreciation. You have been banned from working since mid-March 2020, live on basic security (unemployment benefit II = € 460 / month), are treated unworthily by the authorities there, and may first have to repay promised state aid because the state aid turns out to be sham packages and are forced to reorient themselves professionally.



Help from the table tennis scene? Nothing. Many are forced to look for something new to support their families and their expenses. Our sport is losing something worth investing here, too. One could have strengthened the back of his most important employee groups in a significantly different way.



- One of the biggest problems in our clubs: the Dunning-Kruger-Effect. Many elected club and association representatives often do not notice that they are wrong with many assessments in this new, tremendous phase of upheaval in our society and its effects on our sport. Especially in the area of contemporary club fees or employee (member) management. Half-knowledge often leads to them overestimating their function; they are more likely to make wrong assumptions because they are less familiar. And at the same time do not have the knowledge to recognize the error. Especially people with poorly developed skills (who are unfortunately often chosen for convenience) tend to overestimate their skills. And here

the snake bites its own tail: it is precisely because of their incompetence that these people are unable to recognize that they are incompetent. Instead, they believe that they are superior to others and have a particularly high level of self-esteem. At least in your club or association. There they consider themselves experts ... and of course doubt the competence of real experts. Constantly questioning yourself? Nothing! Asking others for constructive help? Nothing! Really become an expert through active learning? Nothing!

- Otherwise? Nothing ... silence that can be heard in the last corner of Germany. Rigid instead of departure. No call to seize the opportunity with plenty of time to think and discuss. Clubs and associations are apparently suffering from a lack of perspective. For example, where is a call like:

„Everyone is playing table tennis now! Distance guaranteed! Encourage more people to do so! A special kind of lifetime sport! Spend your money on one of the fastest and most exciting sports! Top material and many open players are available to you in our clubs! Try the complexity and fascination of our sport! Have fun! You can also enjoy the competence of our trainers, the various trainings tailored to every level, the opportunity to play competitions, everything we have and offer! Show solidarity with our players, clubs and coaches.“

Our clubs should know that investing and saving have something in common. A common prerequisite, namely a goal! You have to want something and choose something! And this is where the real problem arises that could also be fixed with an update:

the whole package

- lack of ideas,
- the lack of innovation and
- the lack of interest in a common future

... in other words, the contexts in order to escape the current impotence. Because at the moment very few clubs really care what the table tennis world looks like in their environment and in our country. Around 8,000 - 10,000 fewer members every year for over 30 years? No matter. Every year competitions without referees and compliance with the rules in a seemingly parallel world, in which customary law instead of rules and the corresponding stress is played? So what? No uniform game system for all of Germany? What do I care about the gaming system in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern? What do I care about the further development of my sport or how it is perceived by the public?

By not worrying about these questions, you save yourself the argument. However, all then feel that they are the only true yardstick. The “not wanting to



be interested” in the rest of the table tennis world in Germany leads to that peculiar abandonment that can be observed in many German clubs. And which is known "above" as lack of plan ... Club life always runs in the same routines, in training, in competition, in administration. For the human brain this is creeping death. Nothing begins, nothing stops. Everyone thinks there is nothing more interesting out there, no goals ... why should I get involved?

Go out, learn something, take risks or have goals? Why is it no longer worth it ... oh yes ... we seem to want the loss of hope for better, that is, what is actually called the future. An update is urgently needed ... the German clubs exude a peculiar loneliness ...

So there is no point in saving, collecting adventurously low monthly fees from your members and letting your own infrastructure and your own future rot in the process. The goal of investments is not going on like this, not just enough, not a state of preservation (“We have always done it this way!”). Many, many associations in Germany have become organizations that primarily aim to preserve them, not to develop themselves. Such clubs - like the people who attract them - avoid risks. You avoid investments. Now there is nothing wrong with being very careful and weighing up the risks wisely. But when that becomes the main motive, something is fundamentally wrong. Setbacks should not be accepted as “total losses”, but as lessons on how to do it better.

**ICH BIN NICHT DAS
ERGEBNIS MEINER
LEBENSUMSTÄNDE.
ICH BIN DAS
ERGEBNIS MEINER
ENTSCHEIDUNGEN.**